

UPFRONT

■ MONUMENT: Statue arrives to tower over plaza at his namesake university

Gen. Brock makes his stand

KAREN WALTER
QMI Agency Niagara

Holding a striking figure and staring into the distance, Major-General Sir Isaac Brock looks like he's always been a fixture on campus.

"Can you imagine this space without him?" said artist Darius Mozdzenski, when asked what he thought of the new home given to his bronze creation in front of Schmon Tower at Brock University.

"You know what campus this is. You look all the way up here. Could he not be here?"

The \$1.2-million sculpture — paid for by a gift from the late David S. Howes — was positioned in front of the tower Monday. At 4.5 metres tall, the War of 1812 hero immediately became the focal point of the new Isaac Brock Plaza.

Mozdzenski said the space suits a crowd, so he made Brock so tall he'll tower over even a large gathering.

The idea that students will be nostalgic around the piece delighted him.

"He's a signal. He'll become all sorts of things to all sorts of people. It pleases me to no end," Mozdzenski said.

"The students who graduate from here 10 years from now, 30 years from now, they'll remember 'Oh, we was sitting with so-and-so in



Third-year students Jennifer Lee and Megan Gatto take the first selfie with the statue of Major General Sir Isaac Brock.

front of this. It'll be part of everyone's coordinates from now on."

Mozdzenski, an Edmonton artist, won the commission in June 2013 to create a likeness of Brock. The War of 1812 hero died at the Battle of Queenston Heights in 1812, just months after the war began.

More than 100 component parts of his design were cast in bronze and fitted together at a foundry in

Oregon, where Mozdzenski oversaw the process.

This week, the statue journeyed 4,000 kilometres on a flatbed truck from the foundry to the university, arriving Sunday.

Bagpipers and a line of students dressed in red led the truck through campus to Schmon Tower, where about 1,000 people gathered around the plaza to catch the unveiling.

Over the next two hours,

the 1,575 kilogram statue was carefully unloaded by a crew and put into position using a crane.

"A statue like this, you don't know what it's going to do, how it's going to roll, what's going to happen to it. It's a one-shot deal," said foreman Keith Johnston, of Henderson Machinery in Mississauga, explaining the precautions taken by the crew.

"The gentleman took two

A CHAT WITH DANEK MOZDZENSKI

Why is it important students use this statue?

"I wanted to be something warm and useful. Useful emotionally, visually, maybe intellectually. Involve the whole person. I'm hopeful it's useful to others after I've made it, that it transmits, communicates the things I thought were important

about this place, this man."

Why that pose?

"I wanted to show the energy of his intellect, the energy of his will, his decisiveness. The clarity of his investigation into things as they are because that resulted in the actions that he undertook."

years to build it and we don't want something to happen to it, obviously."

Once the concrete was poured at its base, artist Mozdzenski moved aside a barricade and waved in those gathered.

"Good and touch it."

It took no time for students to surround Brock, giving him high fives, lifting him, standing and taking selfies with him.

"It's great to have something that will visually represent the namesake of the university and be a focal point for school spirit and the development. I think, of new traditions and rituals around the statue," said Brock University president Jack Rennick.

What those traditions and rituals will be can't be predicted, he said, adding they'll evolve spontaneously but become an important part of the student identity.

"Definitely will be a rallying point," said Leandro Barreca, a third-year stu-

dent and don, who said it was about time students had a place to gather. "It will bring a lot of students together."

Barreca said the piece was beautiful and the artist did a phenomenal job. "It's hard to go from just pictures, but actually seeing him in real life is just amazing. In detail, you can really see the amount of work the artist put in."

Second-year student and don Alena Kondratjeva said it will be cool to come back when they're older and say they were present when the statue arrived.

"It definitely brings a lot of pride to the school," she said.

"When we were part of the parade, we just got this overwhelming feeling of spirit and Brock Badgers, everything."

A formal ceremony to officially dedicate the statue will happen in May.

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■ TOWN COUNCIL

Partnership possible for new community centre

MARYANNE FIRTH

QMI Agency Niagara

Pelham is one step closer to creating a partnership with YMCA of Niagara for its proposed new community centre.

Council approved a memorandum of understanding between the two organizations Monday night.

The informal document is a "signal of intent" that is going to start more formal negotiations," Mayor Dave Augusyn said Tuesday.

Informal discussions have been underway between town staff and the YMCA for the past year.

"The memorandum is very open, in a sense. It provides a framework for negotiations, the principles and parameters," Augusyn said.

Negotiations are to begin in the next six to eight weeks.

Town council has only gone so far as to green light the planning and design phase of the proposed community centre, estimated to cost \$22 million to \$27 million to build. If approved, it would include a sin-

gle-pad arena with 1,200 to 1,500 seats to start, with a plan to add a second rink when demand requires it. It would also have a double gymnasium, a large meeting room, a break room above it, a fitness area and multipurpose rooms. It would be located in the east Fonthill development area at the corner of Hwy. 20 and Rice Rd.

The architect contracted to create the detailed design will soon begin consultation with potential user groups to determine what is envisioned and what's required, Augusyn said.

A subcommittee of representatives from those user groups will then be formed to review the design once the first draft of the detailed design is completed in the next few months.

"We want to make sure it functions between the different uses," Augusyn said, adding the best way to do that is to consult groups that will make the most use of the facility.

After it is reviewed, the detailed design will be presented to the public and to council for feedback.

"We want to make sure we get this

right," Augusyn said, calling interaction with the community key throughout the process.

A more detailed timeline

of the design process and the steps that follow is expected to be presented to the town's architectural design advisory

committee Thursday.

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■ QUEEN'S PARK

New funding for regional mental health programs



GRANT LAFLECHE / QMI AGENCY NIAGARA

MPP Jim Bradley makes his funding announcement Thursday.

GRANT LAFLECHE
QMI Agency Niagara

New funding from Queen's Park will allow Niagara's public health department to assemble a team to go into the community and help people with serious mental health issues.

The health department is using \$329,524 in provincial assistance, announced Thursday by St. Catharines MPP Jim Bradley, to create a second assertive community treatment team.

The group of clinicians including nurses, social workers and a psychiatrist go into the community to help people who suffer from schizophrenia or bipolar disorder with psychotic tendencies.

"These are people who are on the far end of the mental health spectrum," said Krista Whittard, one of the managers of the department's mental health programming.

"Often times these are people whose illness makes it difficult for them to go out and get help."

Until now, the department had one team of 10 people. At least one member of the team is out in the community helping patients every day with medical issues and advising them on day-to-day life issues.

The money — which is new base funding for the program that will continue indefinitely — will allow the department to hire

another 10 people for a second team.

Peggy Detlor, another mental health program manager at public health, said a second team will make the program more efficient.

The region will be divided in half, reducing travel and response time for both teams, she said.

The funding was one of three batches of public money Bradley announced at regional headquarters in Thorold Thursday.

Another \$134,100 will go to the public health department, with \$34,277 to the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital, to enhance and expand early psychosis intervention programs aimed at youths ages 17 to 24.

Detlor said the early intervention program is designed to help young people with mental health problems cope better and hopefully, not need the services of the community hospital in the future.

Bradley also announced \$42,067 to be directed to the Canadian Mental Health Association's Niagara branch.

The money will be used to put a mental health worker on duty with a Niagara Regional Police officer in St. Catharines to respond to calls involving someone with a mental health issue.

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Shipwrecks – Brothers

SKILL GILLHAM
For QMI Agency Niagara

The cargo ship *Brothers* had been built for the Zim Israel Navigation Co. and completed at Stockholm, Sweden, in February 1950.

The 95.25-metre-long by 13.26-metre-wide vessel entered service under the flag of Israel as *Ezrog*.

Eleven years later, Zim Israel changed the ship's name to *Leora* but did not send the vessel to the Great Lakes under either name. Interestingly, later company ships sailing as *Ezrog* and as *Leora* did come through the St. Lawrence Seaway, but this one remained a saltwater trader.

It was sold to Stylos Cia Nav in 1968 and registered in Panama as *Brothers*. The new owners sent the ship into the Great Lakes in 1972 but within a year it was resold and renamed *Sitia*.

Sitia did not last the year. It was on a voyage from Constanta, Romania, to Gaza with bagged cement when it was wrecked, while at anchor off Gaza, on Dec. 16, 1973.



Brothers is shown in the St. Lawrence Seaway on Oct. 7, 1972, from a photo by Capt. John Low.

PHOTO COURTESY RENE BEAUCHAMP

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Arsenal seized in Fort Erie

An arrest warrant has been issued for a Fort Erie man after police seized four taser, two shotguns, 9-millimetre rifle, two pairs of mass knuckles, and two switchblade knives during a drug trafficking probe that commenced mid-February.

A warrant was issued after four weeks' investigation. Niagara Regional Police said in a news release Wednesday.

Police also seized cocaine, oxycodone pills, marijuana and a "large sum of cash."

Tom Forster is wanted on a warrant for numerous drugs and weapons offences.

NRP implements speech-recognition phone system

In a move said to improve public service, Niagara Regional Police has adopted an automatic speech-recognition telephone system for callers to non-emergency phone lines.

The Nuance system automates call routing, speech-activated dialing and provides access to self-service information. Speech recognition enables callers to reach departmental customer personnel by saying either the name of the department or the person they wish to reach.

Callers who are unable to self-direct their telephone call will continue to have the option of speaking with an operator for assistance.

The Nuance system is a powerful tool that will improve the quality of Niagara Regional Police Service telephone communications and interaction with members of the public.

The new feature is now available at 10 a.m. Wednesday.

RC races at Welland mall

For the sixth year in a row, The National RC Races are being held at Seaway Mall's Centre Court all this week.

The radio-controlled cars are

being raced by more than 200 competitors from across North America on a 209-square-metre arena.

Championship qualifying races in various stock and modified classes are on Saturday and the finals are Sunday.

"This is a rapidly growing hobby and if you come out to watch, it might spark some interest in getting involved," says Mark Frechette, a St. Catharines RC Club member and event organizer.

Radio-controlled cars are self-powered model cars that are controlled from a distance by a specialized transmitter or remote. Cars are powered by various sources that include electric motors and rechargeable batteries.

College student's beer among best

Cheers! Niagara College brewmaster student Nick Saburis is a third-place winner in the Great Ontario-Hopped Craft Beer Competition, hosted recently by the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Convention and held to promote Ontario-grown hops.

Babus, 34, partnered with Clear Valley Hops, a farm near Collingwood, for the competition, which was open to brewer-grower teams or breweries that grow hops. Competitors were challenged with creating a new recipe for a robust porter, following style guidelines for alcohol content, aroma and more.

"Since this is my first competition, I feel really good about placing third. Developing a recipe on a homebrew system, which had to follow given parameters, and applying it to a big 200-litre system at the Niagara College teaching brewery was a very valuable experience for me and others who live in Toronto."

Judging for the third annual competition took place in Niagara Falls on Feb. 18. An award ceremony is expected to be held in April 2015. For details about the competition visit <http://orghops.ca>.



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LOCAL NEWS

■ PUBLIC SAFETY: Mayor threatens firefighter job cuts after they win 9.25% raise

Thorold's 'well has run dry'

ROB HOULE
QMI Agency Niagara

They're getting a hefty raise, but there might be fewer of them, receiving.

An arbitration ruling 6 that will see Thorold professional firefighters receive a 9.2% pay hike and 24-hour shifts will result in a cut in staff, Mayor Ted Luciani said Monday.

"We have no choice. The well has run dry, as far as I'm concerned with the firefighters," Luciani said.

"We can't afford them anymore."

The Thorold Professional Firefighters Association had been working under the terms of its last contract with the city, which expired at the end of 2012. Unable to reach an agreement on a new contract since then, the two parties filed for binding arbitration and a hearing was held Jan. 20.

In her ruling, arbitrator Paula Knopf said she took into account the city's ability to pay and used nearby fire department remuneration and scheduling.

The ruling will see first-class Thorold firefighters get a bump in pay from the \$85,399 their were earning in January 2013 to \$92,119 as of May 1. The arbitrator awarded raises of 3.31% for 2013, 3.44% for 2014 and 2.4% in 2015. An additional 1.2% will be added over a three-year trial period. Firefighters will work 24-hour shifts.

A staff report says the ruling will cost Thorold taxpayers an extra \$341,191 over the three-year period. While money was set aside to cover the cost of raises for 2013 and 2014, the report says not enough was banked and the piggy bank is shy \$7,000.

"We got dingled pretty good," Luciani said.

He said the city could "spend a bundle" and appeal the decision,

but it would likely be a futile exercise against a local association that has the financial might of the Ontario Professional Firefighters Association behind it.

"We need to focus on moving forward with this decision and see how we can effectively manage the fire department under these conditions," Luciani said.

"These guys better open their eyes, the well's run dry."

Recent staff job cuts did not sit well with Rick Honsberger, a captain with the fire department and the local firefighters' association president.

"The well hasn't run dry in Thorold," he said.

Honsberger said the city has \$17 million in reserves, so it's a more a question of it not being willing to pay rather than a question of ability to pay.

"So for the mayor to make threatening statements about staffing levels is totally — I'm

almost at a loss for words — I think it's irresponsible for him to make that statement," Honsberger said.

"It's irresponsible for him to think this is going to affect staffing levels, because staffing levels have been freely negotiated with the City of Thorold ... and it's in the collective agreement. So for the mayor to say it's going to affect staffing levels, he better have a better look at the contract before he makes statements like that."

"The history of staffing was freely negotiated with the city, so it's not like we are at now and they freely bargained it. So if he's going to use that as a threat over us, we'll certainly act on his threats."

There are 18 people in the Thorold Professional Firefighters Association bargaining unit — 16 firefighters, one training officer and one fire prevention officer.

Honsberger said the swing to 24-hour shifts, which was recently mandated for trial periods in arbitration rulings regarding the Welland and St. Catharines fire departments, is important to the health and wellness of firefighters.

"We want to try it. The majority of firefighters in Ontario are on 24s. It's been proven to have dramatic effects on improvements of life, morale, improve-

ments in sick leave, improvements in (Workplace Safety and Insurance Board) claims," Honsberger said.

Luciani said he doesn't want to pay anyone to sleep.

"We'll be paying them huge dollars just to sleep. I have a problem with that," he said.

The pay for Thorold firefighters will be similar to those with the St. Catharines, Welland and Niagara Falls fire departments, but actually more than what is paid in London, now coming to the class firefighters in Thorold, where at the end of 2014 — the final year of a three-year contract — they were paid \$80,623.

"Compared to Toronto, Thorold is a very easy gig," Luciani said.

Honsberger said raises for Thorold firefighters have used the pay of firefighters in Welland, St. Catharines and Niagara Falls as comparables for as long as he has been association president, which dates back to 1991.

"The pay raises are no longer sustainable, the mayor said.

"We have hit the wall as far as having to pay for a fire service," Luciani said.

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A shot of the Thorold Fire Department Station 1 on Townpath Rd. in Thorold.

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Pick-and-pay cable won't be painless

JOHN LAW

QMI Agency Niagara

"Give us choice!" you asked.

You got it, says the CRTC. "Give us pick-and-pay with our cable bills" the masses demanded.

Coming right up, says the CRTC. "But please, don't raise our cable bills and screw us over like you always do!" we added.

"Cricket?"

Come on, you didn't think Thursday's announcement of more choice with your cable channels didn't come with some fine print, did you? When it comes to the CRTC, good news is always followed with a "but."

In this case, you'll get to pick your own cable channels at some point next year. But ... it could cost more money. And some new channels you like might disappear. And some Canadian broadcasting jobs could be lost.

Man, can't we savor this victory without getting hummed out?

But that's the thing — what we see as a victory is hollow at best. We "win" something that should have happened several years ago. Forcing people to pay for channels you don't want in order to watch the ones you do is such an archaic, insulting concept, the CRTC had no choice but to finally buckle.

It doesn't matter that many of the channels no one is watching are Canadian. They're not here to encourage fed-up cable customers to support a product they don't care about. It's hard enough getting them to pay for the stuff they actually watch — why am I paying for a dozen or so French stations? Or a station with Italian variety shows? Or a Seattle station showing reruns of How I Met Your Mother?

They are never, EVER watching on my TV. So why are they there? If I had to break it down, I probably don't watch 80% of the stuff in my cable package.

I understand I'll be paying groceries knowing I'll only eat 20% of them. I don't pay to watch a movie and leave after 20 minutes. The most appalling part of our cable TV arrangement is just how long we've tolerated it.

And by "we," I mean the folks who haven't cut the cord yet. A group getting smaller each day. Call it stubbornness, laziness, gull, whatever ... I still believe in paying for the stuff I enjoy. I still want to support the shows I watch. They aren't free to make, they shouldn't be free to consume.

I would be a terrible pirate. But our prehistoric cable packages

have sent otherwise honest folk to the dark side, and I can't blame them. Cord-cutters were the big topic of discussion at the CRTC's Feb. 12 TV distribution in Quebec City. The so-called A "skinny basic" package costed at \$25 per month that will include local and regional content. Beyond that, customers can pick and choose individual stations on a monthly basis.

Here's the catch, though. If you expect The Movie Network during Game of Thrones time to cost the same as Teletoon Retro, please take a selfie when you open your cable bill.

Cheer comes with a cost. It's like the hydro company charging you to conserve energy. So here's to your choices to make up for lost revenue. For years, the CRTC has given smaller channels a fighting chance by making them part of the package with the big stations. Without that safety net, many of them will vanish.

Does it matter? Should we care?

Advocacy group Friends of Canadian Broadcasting thinks so.

"The decision is irresponsible," spokesman Ian Morrison said Thursday. "The move to unbundle cable channels and introduce a la carte basic TV service represents a body blow to Canadian content on TV and will leave consumers expecting a price break disappointed."

He said the CRTC is "rolling the dice" on an industry that generates more than \$15 billion in revenue and 66,000 jobs.

But what's the flipside? Continually ignoring what customers want? They've spoken, with every illegal download. Every black market cable box. Every card they cut.

Friday's decision might already be too late for the cable industry — as with many other goods, people get a taste for free. It doesn't matter what you charge. They won't pay it.

Customers have made it clear: They will not prop up niche channels just because they're Canadian. If no one's watching it doesn't matter who makes them.

A day after the announcement, I got an e-mail from a Canadian company making a new series called Tall Ship Odyssey for the Discovery Channel. The weird part? They're sending a press tour inviting viewers to "have their say about potential new TV series."

In other words, they want to know if you care before they bother making it.

Welcome to the new cable landscape, where pick-and-pay means less risk and innovation than ever.

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LOCAL NEWS

■ ECONOMY: Gasoline costs hover near \$1 mark

High prices at pumps costing jobs: Gates

TONY RICCIUTO
QMR Agency Niagara

The price of gas at the pumps is still too high and it needs to come down, says Niagara Falls MPP Wayne Gates.

While some local residents agree with him, others appear to be content that gas prices have remained relatively close to the dollar-a-litre mark.

"I'm good with it the way it is right now and if it stays around a dollar," said Jason Osborne, who drives a smaller vehicle that is quite economical on gas. "I have no complaint. I'm happy with it."

Gates, a member of the NDP, has called on the Liberal government to level the playing field by putting a stop to what he calls price gouging.

He said that while the price of oil has dropped to less than \$50 a barrel, like it was during the winter months when Niagara residents were paying about 85 cents a litre, drivers in the region are paying more than \$1 a litre.

Gates said drivers shouldn't have to go to neighbouring communities to find a gas station with prices they can afford.

The high price of energy in Niagara is costing us needed jobs, Gates

said. "Companies are moving across the border where they can get cheaper gasoline and energy prices," said Gates, adding the first thing the Liberals should do is "be up the powers of the Ontario Energy Board to take a hard look at gas prices in order to reduce price unpredictability and unfair pricing."

Bart Wilson said she can't figure out how gas prices can go from 85 cents to more than \$1 dollar without any explanation, while oil prices remain low.

"I just don't understand it. The only good thing about paying \$1 is that it could be less and we could be paying 52," said Wilson.

According to gasbuddy.com, the listed price of gas in the Niagara, Hamilton and Toronto areas on Wednesday was about \$1.018 a litre.

On the average, that was about 25.8 cents less than what motorists were paying last year at this time when it cost \$1.276 a litre.

Gasbuddy.com is a website that keeps track of gas prices across Canada, the United States, and also helps motorists find cheap gas prices in their area.

Patrick DeHaan, a senior petroleum analyst with the website, said the market for gasoline is more competitive on

the American side because they have more refineries so there is more competition and prices stay lower.

However, in border towns such as Niagara Falls, gas stations on the American side can actually keep their prices just a bit higher than other areas because they know Canadians will be crossing the border to buy their gas.

"In recent weeks, some of the larger companies have padded their margins, which means they have been increasing their profit margins on gasoline a bit," said DeHaan.

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Gas prices were round the \$1 mark in Niagara on Wednesday.

LOCAL NEWS

■ ANIMALS

Charges laid against couple in case of emaciated dog

QMI Agency Niagara

Charges have been laid against a St. Catharines couple in the case of an emaciated dog found earlier this month.

The Lincoln County Humane Society said Friday it has laid four charges each against a 23-year-old woman and a 26-year-old man.

The charges, under the Ontario Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, include permitting an animal to be in distress, causing an animal to be in distress, failing to provide adequate and appropriate medical attention and failing to provide adequate and appropriate food.

The emaciated whippet was not released by the humane society in line with SPCA policy, will appear in provincial offences court in St. Catharines on May 19.

The French mastiff was

42.9 pounds — about half a normal weight — when she was picked up running at large near Niagara and Scott streets on March 4. She had recently nursed puppies.

The humane society tracked down the owner the next day after tips poured in from the public on social media.

Minnie had escaped from a yard near the area where she was found. The owner surrendered her to the humane society.

The humane society said Minnie is now in foster care, doing well and continuing to gain weight. She was 58.90 pounds Friday.

KARENNA WALTER/QMI AGENCY NIAGARA
Minnie is seen here 16 pounds heavier with Dr. Lisa Hutchison of Huntington Animal Hospital.



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LOCAL NEWS

■ HUMANE SOCIETY: 10-month-old cat found injured outside LCBO store

Lost a leg, looking for a home

JOHN LAW
QMI Agency Niagara

She just wanted to get warm on a frigid February night.

Instead, a 10-month-old Niagara Falls cat was left freezing, bleeding, and clinging to life in a shopping plaza parking lot.

When staff at the Oakwood Dr. LCBO store found the distressed kitten, they knew it they'd taken in "Tequila Rose" with a paw was a mangled mess. The Niagara Falls Humane Society was called, and she was brought to Heartland Animal Hospital

the next day for surgery.

Not only was her left leg amputated, she had a gash on her neck, an injury to her right leg, and cuts along her tail. The Humane Society says she tried to find warmth under the hood of a car and got caught in the engine when it started.

"That's why we tell people in the winter to bring their hood once or twice," says staff member Nicole McKenzie. "It gives the cat a chance to be like, 'Hey, I should go. They're just desperate for warmth and they'll go anywhere.'

Featured on Wednesday's episode of *The Adoptables* on the Niagara Falls Review, St. Catharines Standard and Welland Tribune websites, Tequila Rose is the latest poster cat for the LCBO store near where she was found. Staff have put out a donation box to pay for her upkeep, which has already raised more than \$500.

"They've been so excited," says McKenzie. "They called us and said 'It's full again.'

A 70-year-old woman walked in, gave them \$10 and said, "Here, it's for Tequila."

"People have been very generous," adds Jen Wanless of the Humane Society. "Even if we raise her money, we'll use it (the remainder) for the next animal."

Three weeks after her surgery, Tequila Rose is showing some personality. She's affectionate, but doesn't like loud noises or activity. She requires a quiet home where "she can be the queen," says McKenzie. She'll be ready to adopt in about two weeks, and Wanless expects a long list of people hoping to take her home.



NIAGARA NEIGHBOURS QMI AGENCY NIAGARA

Jen Wanless of the Niagara Falls Humane Society with a 10-month-old cat named Tequila Rose. They believe she was trying to get warm in a car engine when she was horribly injured three weeks ago. But after surgery to remove her left leg, she'll be ready to adopt in two weeks.

come with their quirks."

To adopt Tequila Rose or any animal at the Niagara Falls Humane Society, phone 905-356-4404 or visit www.nfhs.ca

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LOCAL NEWS

■ TRANSPORTATION: Province grants town \$100,000 for two-year pilot project

Pelham transit system to be given a trial run

OREG FURNIGER
Ogilvy Agency Niagara

Pelham will take another crack at establishing a transportation system.

A trial run more than a decade ago fizzled out, but a partnership with nearby Welland Transit drew an average three bus riders a day.

And casual talks with potential partners since then has failed to produce any alternative travel arrangements.

But now Ontario's Transportation Ministry is ponying up \$100,000 for a two-year Pelham pilot project aimed at providing better transportation services for seniors, people with disabilities, youths and others who need a ride through shared transportation or of community transportation resources.

Receiving the maximum, Pelham is one of 11 municipalities chosen to receive up to \$100,000 through the Community Transportation Pilot Grant Program, and was selected from 54 applicants across Ontario who requested funding between Nov. 24, 2014, and Jan. 30.

"The Government of Ontario is committed to ensuring better access to transportation services for all residents, so that they can access community services and maintain an active lifestyle," Transportation Minister Steven Del Duca said in a prepared statement.

In an e-mail, Vickie van Ravenswaay, Pelham's recreation and culture director and author of the municipality's grant application, said the town intends develop an inter-municipal transit system that will connect to Niagara College, a few kilometres south of Fonthill and to the Niagara Regional Transit system.

Consultation with Pelham residents will determine community routes and stops, such as transit facilities, shopping areas, recreation facilities, education sites, senior facilities and the food bank.

Part of the pilot project will be to implement a trans-cab service to accommodate residents in areas outlying villages of Fonthill and Fenwick and to serve those who have special accessibility needs.

A volunteer component will be part of the project.

The transit plan is hoped to lessen the

demand for transportation services long provided by Pelham Cares, which collabotated on the town's grant application.

The organization's client services coordinator, Laurie Grande, called the provincial funding "good news for Pelham."

Pelham Cares' ride program — "perhaps the only transportation system in town" — is reliant on the availability of its volunteer drivers to chauffeur its clients to medical appointments across the region, and sometimes outside Niagara, she said.

"We're able to meet the need now, but to expand (service) is another ball game."

That's why Pelham Cares stepped up to the plate for the pilot project.

With Fonthill poised to expand by more than 1,100 homes over the next couple of decades, Niagara Region continuing with its transit pilot project and talks about getting expanded GO services in the region, Grande suggested the timing could be right for Pelham's transportation project.

Pelham's funding will be provided from April 1 to March 31, 2017. After that period, the project will be evaluated.

"We are thrilled to receive this grant and are very grateful to the provincial government for the support," said Mayor Dave Augustyn. "We look forward to working together with our partners to advance one of our community's key goals — increasing access to public transportation."

But it will need users.

At the end of April 2004, a four-month pilot project with Welland Transit went bust because of lack of riders. The project, at no cost to the Town of Pelham, involved a modified route for inter-municipal service to Brock University, but ran through Fonthill only three times a day.

Ridership never exceeded eight Pelham residents a day — and the average was scant three a day — for trips costing \$3.

Welland Transit approached the town for help to defer the cost of continuing the service, but the request was turned down.

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LOCAL NEWS

■ BIZ BUZZ

Sweet support for record attempt

MARYANNE FIRTH
QMI Agency Niagara

What do you get when you combine 1,000 people, 5,000 desserts and a worthy cause? If all goes well, the recipe for the world's largest dessert party.

Niagara College's event management students believe they have all the ingredients necessary to break the Guinness world record for the biggest gathering of people enjoying sweets.

They'll attempt to make the mark in history on April 1 at 3 p.m. in the lower-level gym of the Niagara-on-the-Lake campus.

Before people can satisfy their craving for confections, the sweet treats have to be created.

Enter a number of local busi-

nesses who have donated their time to make the event, which supports the Many Hands Project, a success story. The Many Hands Project is this year using funds to complete renovations at St. Rose Niagara — a Welland-based organization that helps young mothers continue their education.

Ryan Hegedus and Stacey Clare are no strangers to participating in community events.

The owners of Above and Beyond Cupcakes are always looking for new opportunities to spread word about their business and help out where they can.

The Niagara College alumni quickly jumped on board with the dessert party, offering to whip up 1,000 treats.

It may sound like a hefty order, and it is, but it's worth it to help make people aware of the small, independent busi-

ness, Hegedus said.

"Especially that's the big thing," she said.

"It's about getting our name out there more and being able to feature what we do."

Hegedus and Clare have been working to promote Above and Beyond's allergy-aware baked goods that provide nut-free, sugar-free, gluten-free and dairy-free options.

The combined bakery and cafe like many businesses, relies on word of mouth to generate new customers. Events like the dessert party are a prime opportunity for people to sample the product, including allergy-aware alternatives, before ever entering the King St. shop, Clare said.

They're also a great chance to give back to the community, Hegedus added.

"Welland has been good to us and so supportive," Clare said. "It's great to have two women fiercely loyal to the city and eager to do their part."

Along with Above and Beyond Cupcakes, several Niagara businesses will be donating items to satisfy each and every sweet tooth at the dessert party.

Willow Cakes and Pastries of Niagara-on-the-Lake, PigOut Catering of St. Catharines and the college's Benchmark restaurant will each be donating 1,000 desserts.

Niagara Fallsview Casino Resort will be donating 500 treats, while Feasibilities of Welland and Bella Cakes of Niagara Falls will each contribute 250.

"In order to break the record, every person in the room will need at least three different

desserts," college event management program co-ordinator Christine Charron said.

There is an existing record of 794 people held by an ice-cream shop in Massachusetts that will need to be broken for Niagara College to take the title.

Blane stressed everyone must register in advance of the event so the attendance numbers can be carefully tracked for Guinness.

"If you want to have bragging rights to say, 'I broke a world record,' this is the easiest way to do it," she said while hoping to encourage people to attend.

Tickets are \$5 and include desserts, beverages and entertainment.

VIP tickets are available for \$20, which also include entry to the after party.

To register your name and pre-purchase a ticket, call 905-735-2211, ext. 6406, e-mail desertparty2015@gmail.com or visit www.niagaracollege.ca/desertparty2015.

■ ■ ■

Moksha Restaurant of Fonthill wants to help diners experience Hawaii.

The Pelham St. eatery is hosting an authentic Hawaiian luau and a hula show on Thursday. Seating begins at 6:30 p.m., dinner at 7 p.m. and the hula show at 8:15 p.m.

Tickets, which include entertainment and a dinner buffet, are \$20 for adults and \$35 for children.

To reserve seats, call 905-892-3336.

The Tribune's Biz Buzz column appears every Wednesday. If you have a business tip, send it to maryanne.firth@sunmedia.ca or call 905-684-7251, ext. 1144.



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LOCAL NEWS

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BUDGET

Port to hire deputy fire chief

MARYANNE FIRTH
OMI Agency Niagara

Port Colborne is getting a deputy fire chief.

A hot topic during budget deliberations, the contentious issue was finally settled Monday night when councillors agreed to fill the man-agreement position.

The decision, however, was far from unanimous.

A heated debate grew over the role that's anticipated to cost the city upward of \$40,000 for salary and benefits.

Funding for the position has been in the budget for several years after the department's public liaison role was left vacant. In past years, the money has been used to help cover the cost of sick-leave payouts for retirees.

The recommendation to hire a deputy fire chief came from the fire master planning committee, which has undertaken an extensive review of Port Colborne's fire services.

"When I'm looking at this, I put a lot of weight into that recommendation," said Ward 4 Coun. Ron Bodner, crediting the committee for the hard work that went into looking for improvements in the crucial city services.

The ever-increasing workload and stagnant staffing levels have hurt the department by impeding its fire prevention officer from properly fulfilling his duties, said Fire Chief Tom Cartwright.

The officer has instead been busy taking on other tasks deemed mandatory by the province and necessary by city council, he said.

Between 2009 and 2014, fire prevention officer Mike Bendis spent an average of 291 hours per year on work outside the realm of fire prevention and education, he said.

The hiring of a deputy chief is expected to relieve that burden and save the city at least \$20,000 in overtime costs and acting chief's pay, Cartwright added.

Without hiring a deputy, that burden will only continue to grow, said Ward 4 Coun. Barbara Butters, who sits on the fire master planning committee.

"You only have so many bodies there. You only have so many resources there," she said.

"If you have a workload that continues to grow but the numbers stay the same, at some point some stuff is either not going to get done or peo-

ple are going to be wearing hats that are not appropriate to that work environment."

Ward 1 Coun. Dave Elliott believed the \$126,000 a year would be better spent on other costs faced by the city, including infrastructure work, community improvements, servicing the east-side employment lands and helping pay for the new multimillion-dollar community centre that is in Port Colborne's future.

"I have not heard from one single resident that wants us to do this," he said of filling the management position.

"They all say, 'We don't want it. We don't need it.'

"You want to spend \$126,000 on a position, and I haven't heard one single word about what we need to do to reduce the workload. Instead, it's let's spend because the fire department is overworked."

Cartwright, frustrated, Elliott said council should review the provincially mandated and council-directed services to determine where the workload can be minimized.

"We've been at this for four or five weeks now. You had the core services and the mandated services in front of you," Bodner said in response to Elliott's outburst.

"You could've come to the table and said you want to cut 10 of the services council added. Easy as that. The opportunity is there," he said.

Butters said the committee went over the department's services "with a fine-toothed comb" looking for inefficiencies or duties that could be removed.

"We went through every imaginable thing on the list one by one," she said.

"I could not envision the public being happy with even one of those things cut, because they've come to rely on it," she said.

Butters told Elliott if he wished to defend his position, he could go over the services again, "in all means."

"I don't know what you want to unplug. I'm quite convinced there's nothing to be unplugged. But if you can say to me, 'We don't need this block of stuff' and there are savings to be found there, then have at it."

The motion to hire the deputy chief was approved by Bodner, Butters, Ward 2 councillors Angie Desmarais and Yvon Doucet, and Ward 3 Coun. Bea Kenny. It was opposed by Elliott, Ward 1 Coun. Lynne Macneane and Ward 3 Coun. Frank Dinch.

While the recommendation, as well as the budget itself, was approved Monday, it will need to be ratified at the next gathering of council.



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LOCAL NEWS

EDUCATION



ALLAN BENNER/QMI AGENCY/Niagara

Ontario Finance Minister Charles Sousa, right, uses a 3-D scanner at Niagara College with student Mike Granton from St. Catharines. Sousa was at the college Wednesday to break ground on a new 15,000-square-foot Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre on Wednesday in Welland.

Work to begin on college innovation centre

ALLAN BENNER
QMI Agency Niagara

Ontario Finance Minister Charles Sousa said there's "no better place to invest \$4.2 million," than to spend it on a new Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre at Niagara College.

"We must invest in our talent and our skills and that ultimately is what will set us apart from every other jurisdiction around the world," Sousa said during a visit to the college's Welland campus Wednesday, breaking ground on the 15,000-square-foot facility to be built as an addition to the north end of the Rankin Technology Centre. "Niagara College, to their credit, has seen a much better way by which to provide experiential learning, cooperative enablement and the talent of these students to develop the very things that businesses need."

"These guys back behind me," Sousa said gesturing to a group of students standing with him at the podium, "they provide the smarts, the brains, the new ideas the innovation."

He said it's the new ideas current student provide that will help attract foreign investment in the province.

The college's associate vice-president of research and innovation, Marc Nantel, said students have been providing research and development assistance to Niagara industries working within two classrooms.

Using 3D scanning and printing technology, the students work on about 40 projects a year for local industries.

Nantel said one recent project cre-

ated a design for a 10-tonne aluminum gantry crane "which is the only one in the world."

The company has already received orders for the crane and "they've already created jobs with this new product," he said.

Another project, done for Thorold's Noren Biotech Corp., enhanced the manufacturing process for its DNA and RNA test kits, increasing productivity 24 times.

Completed in about one year, the college will double or triple the number of projects the students will be able to complete.

College president Dan Patterson said the provincial government investment "means a lot to the college and the community."

"Hard work and a compelling vision really does pay off," Patterson said, adding college faculty worked with community partners and industry to develop a compelling case for support.

"Now we have an opportunity to translate our vision and dream into reality," Patterson said. "It's an extraordinary exciting time for Niagara College and our industry partners. Our goal will be to be among the best leaders in supporting industry and innovation through this new centre."

Sousa hinted at future investment in the college, saying the \$4.2 million "isn't where it's going to stop."

"We have to continue to do more," he said.

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LOCAL NEWS

■ POLICE: McGuire says 'no one takes great pleasure' in pulling over speeding drivers

Chief busts ticket quota myth

BILL SAWCHUK
QMI Agency Niagara

Niagara's police chief is reassuring drivers his officers aren't out there to serve and collect.

Welland Tribune readers wanted to know if the Niagara Regional Police have a quota system for handing out traffic tickets. Statistics show the NRP wrote 43,330 of them last year.

Tickets are an important part of traffic enforcement and safety — but no, there isn't a quota, Chief Jeff McGuire said during this month's Chat With the Chief webcast Thursday on wellandtribune.ca.

"It is not a fun part of policing," he said.

"Nobody takes great pleasure in pulling someone over and giving them \$300 worth of tickets, but it is an expectation of our officers and a part of policing."

"I wouldn't tolerate a uniformed police officer who patrolled in St. Catharines for a year and hadn't arrested anyone. It doesn't make sense. I wouldn't be happy if I had a police officer out in Fort Erie who has never written a report."

"Traffic safety is a core responsibility of every single uniformed police officer."

McGuire said revenue from traffic tickets is collected by the Provincial Offences Court and flows back to the local government.



QMI Agency Niagara reporter Bill Sawchuk and St. Catharines Standard managing editor Erica Bajer speak with Niagara Regional Police Chief Jeff McGuire, in this file photo. McGuire rejected the idea that officers must meet a quota for issuing traffic tickets.

ment.

"If that were the case, you could go to your officers and say, 'Look, budget times are

tight, we are going to have to write a thousand tickets each

this month because we are

getting \$1 apiece,' but that is not the way it works."

Chat with the Chief is a webcast on [stcatherines-standard.ca](http://www.stcatherines-standard.ca) conducted monthly.

Questions and comments can be submitted on Twitter using hashtag #AskMcGuire.

McGuire said he keeps a ticket book handy, though he admits having the chief of police tied up in traffic court might not be the best use of executive resources.

"I have a book of tickets in my car at the ready," he said. "I have been a police officer since I have been in Niagara, but this can be fair warning ... the next person that is talking on the phone (in a car) beside me could be my first."

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LOCAL NEWS

■ **RURAL BLAZES:** Four suspicious barn fires have investigators' hands full

Sifting through the ruins

GREG FURNINGER
ONI Agency Niagara

Once used to house cattle and hay but more recently to store older farm machinery, the barn that had stood next to Paul Mego's Grassie Rd. home since he moved there a half-century ago is now a flat-tended pile of charred rubble.

The wooden structure that in recent years was given a new metal roof is one of three West Lincoln barns that went up in flames in just over a hour on Saturday.

A fourth barn was discovered ablaze a few miles away in Hamilton east of Binklow in the wee hours Sunday.

All are considered suspicious, and police investigators will look into whether an arsonist is to blame.

Mego was in St. Catharines

when he learned his barn was on fire.

"There was a lot of hay in there and a lot of straw, so it was quite a blaze," he said after being spotted Monday morning wandering among the ruins, much of which had earlier been pulled apart by a backhoe to clear the fire from inside a garage.

Mego said he was only storing some old farm equipment in the building on which he dropped insurance coverage two or three years ago. His other buildings on the property immediately north of Regional Rd. 20 are insured, but were not damaged.

A 40-foot recreational trailer parked next to the barn also was not insured but was destroyed.

The barn itself contained old farm equipment,



Little remains of Paul Mego's Grassie Rd. storage barn. This was one of several suspicious fires reported late Saturday in West Lincoln

"A bunch of it, you wouldn't even know it existed," he said of what little now remains.

For Mego, all signs point to arson.

"It had no hydro in it, so there was no way for it to catch fire," he said.

Niagara Regional Police, who did not provide an update Monday, put the call for Mego's fire as having come in at 12:46 a.m. Sunday.

It was the third in West Lincoln.

The first fire at 11:32 p.m. Saturday on the unpaved Vaughn Rd. immediately west of Port Davidson Rd. destroyed a house and barn that a worker at neighbouring Countryside Automotive said had been abandoned.

The second fire a few kilometres southwest at 8748 South Chippawa Rd. near North Chippawa, was called in at 11:53 p.m. and appears to have destroyed an abandoned barn just west

of an old farmhouse with boarded-up windows.

Mego's property is several

kilometres north of the second

reported fire.

Hamilton police are also investigating, after fire caused significant damage to a barn at 1560 Westbrook Rd. near Twenty Rd., just past 3 a.m. Sunday.

West Lincoln fire Chief Dennis Fisher could not be reached for comment Monday by phone or e-mail.

GREG FURNINGER/ONI AGENCY NIAGARA

The blazes required that firefighters from services in Grimby and Haldimand be called in to assist.

Police ask anyone with information regarding the fires, or who may have seen anything suspicious, to contact investigators at 905-735-7811.

The Office of the Ontario Fire Marshal is also investigating.

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